CHAPTER III.

Relative Tribes or Kavirondo.

101 The generic name used of these peoples by themselves is Ja-Luo. The Bantu Kavirondo people call them Awa-Nyore. A very common term for them is Wa-Nilo.

231 *Modes of subsistence.*—They all live by agriculture. They reside in fixed 238 villages of from ten to fifty huts. Nearly all the villages are surrounded by 241 euphorbia hedges; formerly many villages had mud and occasionally stone walls, but this custom has died out. They breed cattle, sheep, goats, and fowls.

[224] 226 *Hunting and fishing.*—They dig pitfalls for elephants and also spear elephants. They catch large quantities of fish in the Lake Victoria Nyanza by means of large conical wicker traps "dema." The process is as follows:—They have two enormously long ropes; one end of each rope is secured on shore, and the ropes are then paid out into the lake, one rope floats on the surface and from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks; the other rope is a ground rope, and is weighted with stones, and the two ropes are connected at intervals. By means of canoes these ropes are gradually brought round in a semi-circle the size of which gradually decreases. The fish rush shorewards to escape from the drawing in of the net, and rush into the mouth of the big wicker traps which are placed in a row in the shallow water near the shore. At the same time the women walk up and down dragging smaller hooped traps in which they collect myriads of tiny fish the size of a sardine. They fish a great deal at night by torchlight. They state that they get the best hauls of fish after rain; in the dry season they catch comparatively few. Rafts of sesbania wood are used for laying out the net (sesbania is a very light spongy wood growing on the lake shore; it has a prickly bark). [238] They split and dry large quantities of fish and carry it inland from the lake for considerable distances to sell for grain.

227 229 Lines and hooks are also used to a certain extent by the Nyakach people and others. The people bordering the lake possess a few dug-out canoes and also a few of the sewn canoes bought from Baganda or Busoga.

[4] *Bridges.*—They build rough bridges of timber across the rivers when in flood, but not suspension bridges like the North Kavirondo.

247 252 *Cooking, etc.*—They cook in earthen pots inside their huts, and also in the verandah of the huts. All cooking is done by women. The food is served up in little baskets. The father eats with his sons; they generally eat in a little separate hut with open sides built for the purpose. Women eat separately and inside the house.

[72] *Fire.*—They know the use of firesticks but rarely need them, as they can always obtain a glowing ember from one or other of their neighbours.

[pp. 27-35 not preserved]

584 dispose of it as he pleased. On her return a feast was held—the two
spoke—for her and her companions. Preparations for this feast were
made before her arrival, and the guests invited and the kind of enter-
tainment provided seems to have varied according to the family
circumstances. If the parents were poor only the girl's sisters and
the friends of her own age who had accompanied her were present;
porridge and milk were set before them, and the guests returned on
the same day to their own homes. But if the family was rich, elder
relations and friends of both sexes were invited and were given meat
and beer. The quantity of beer required was often more than could
[343] be stored in the accustomed place, namely the hut belonging to the
girl's mother, and in this case a temporary shelter was built, known
as the *siwandha*. It was constructed of reed mats between the
mother's hut and the hut next to it, and if the number of reed mats
available in the dala was insufficient, more were borrowed from the
neighbours. After the beer had been drunk the *siwandha* hut was
dismantled and its component parts returned to their owners. The
[435 guests stayed two or even three days, and it was the convention that
● 262] before their departure a final meal of meat or of a kind of dried fish
called *kaisha* (an expensive dish that cost a goat to buy) should be
provided and cooked for them by the mother of the bride.

A sort of parallel to this feast known as *lupo* then took place in
the bridegroom's dala, a cow or a goat being sent to him by the bride's
parents to be killed and eaten by his brothers and sisters.

291 After the two *nyako* and the *lupo* had taken place a bull known
584 as the *dho gulo ongimbo* was paid by the bridegroom, and with them
he sent a new *ongimbo*, specially made for her, to the bride. She
then returned the *ongimbo* lent to her by the bridegroom's sister, and
also took off the small *chiewo* and burnt it, being now entitled to wear
the big *chiewo* of the married woman. This was a bunch of aloe fibre
about ten inches long and thick enough to have a diameter of three or
four inches. It was tied tightly at the top like a tassel, and was worn
hanging from the small of the back, being attached to a string which
passed round the waist. This, and a six inch square apron of fibre
[171] string was all that a Luo woman wore, apart from her ornaments until
the advent of the Indian trader with his cotton piece goods at the
beginning of the century.*

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[648] * Even now a woman who puts on a cotton dress when she leaves the dala sometimes asserts in the privacy of her home to the traditional subdress adorned only by the tassel and the fringe, and often she dons it just on over the tassel. This curious ornament has clearly a ritual if not a magical significance, of which I hope to obtain details later. I was informed that if a man touches, accidentally or purposely, the tassel of a married woman, he has to pay a fine of three goats to her husband. Moreover, when a woman loses her husband she discards her tassel of aloe fibre and replaces it by one of banana fibre, and this tassel apparently has subsidiary properties. For if any man accosts her, she is likely to take it off and beat one of his cows with it, whereupon the cow is regarded as bewitched, and no one will buy it, or accept it in payment of a debt.

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Similarly, during this time she must be careful where she walks. She can ruin a crop by walking through it. But, of course, in this case, she would suffer with the other members of the family.

From early childhood the girl is brought up as an agricultural labourer. There was no class of women divorced from the soil. The only class whose labours in agriculture were lightened were the women who belonged to the divining cult of "SEWE." Sewe is the spirit of divination and is supposed to have descended on those who have been delirious in illness. The delirium is the sign of possession. The devotees of the cult are mainly women, and they are a fairly common sight as they go about their avocation. They are skilled beggars as well as diviners. With their bodies festooned with strings of beads, shells, bells and other barbaric ornaments, they pass from kraal to kraal, and standing with their bodies leaning forward supported by a hand resting on a short stick they sing songs of the countryside and and are rewarded by presents of small baskets of grain. In this way women who have been ill are enabled to help to replenish the grain stores, which have probably run low during the illness.

Gradually a change is coming over the life of the women, due to white influence. Ploughing by the men with teams of oxen, is setting women free for other tasks. This movement is by no means widespread, but it has begun, and its effect on the women has been great. Even if the husband has no team and plough himself, many wives do not rest content until the husband has hired a plough owner to come along and plough up the land. It is not unusual for ploughs to be taken 15 miles for this purpose. Again, the use of hand mills of the "Colonist" type, is easing women of much labour at the grind stones. These are much more common than ploughs, probably there are twenty mills for every plough in use. This is partly accounted for by the fact that the mills are turned by hand power, not by oxen. At this labour girls and women take their share, but whereas you would never see a man down on his knees at the grindstone, you do see them turning a mill. New activities are employing the time of many women, and those who have learned to knit or make palm mats to count years are rapidly increasing in numbers.

Child Labour:

Generally speaking, from early childhood, all are required to make some contribution to the activities of the home. Girls for the fields, and boys for herding, is the broad division of labour, though the boys also lend a hand in the fields, and, very occasionally, a girl or woman may be seen herding. With the opening up of avenues of wage-earning to the boys on coffee and tea estates, and in other forms of employment, the male child is being made by economic [illegible] to make [illegible] contribution to the family [illegible].

buttermilk is used for making gruel which can be consumed by both sexes. Both buttermilk and fresh milk are used for cooking vegetables and fresh bovine blood for human consumption. The Luo do not slaughter their cattle for beef except for some special reason, for example, on the occasion of a special feast. The ordinary meat eaten is that of animals which have died as a result of disease or accident. If there is an outbreak of a serious disease and many animals die, their meat is made into biltong which can be stored for future consumption. Such biltong forms a very palatable diet when properly cooked with ghee. Girls do not eat the meat of cattle paid for their dowries.

Hides are used as sleeping mats, and for making shields, drums, sandals and special head-dresses on which ostrich feathers are fixed. Those of very young animals are used as clothes.

Cattle can be exchanged for millet or maize at any time, i.e., during famine or in good years; but cattle-owners tend to refuse millet or maize for their cattle after good harvests. This is one of the facts which support the argument of the Luo elders who prefer animals to crops. In exchanging cattle for goats and sheep, a bull is worth three to four goats and a heifer, six to eight goats or sheep. A goat or sheep is worth six to eight fowls.

The young men use young oxen for riding, and they sell heifers to buy buffalo hides for making shields or ostrich feathers for their adornment at funeral dances. Cattle accompany the mourners when attending funerals and, during inter-tribal wars, oxen were the companions of warriors on the battlefield. The horns make valuable trumpets and are used as containers for keeping powdered drugs. Tendons make strong strings for harps and bows. Cattle dung is useful for smearing houses and dry dung is good for the fire. Fresh blood as mentioned above makes a palatable food when mixed with milk and cooked. The scrotum of small animals is used as a butter-scoop and for other domestic purposes. Hoofs are used for storing drugs and for running liquid medicines into the noses of both human and animal patients, e.g. an infusion of a plant known in Luo as *pondorum** is given in this way to cattle suffering from east coast fever. The long hair of the tail is used for trapping birds. The scrotum forms a valuable pocket.

Goats' milk is the food of the herd-boys when looking after animals in the pastures. They add the juice of a fruit† to the fresh milk and after a few minutes the milk coagulates and is ready for consumption. Goat skins are worn by both men and women and goat's meat is eaten by both sexes. The goat is the animal usually slaughtered for female visitors such as mothers and sisters-in-law. The chief produce from sheep is mutton

*Solanum sp. probably S. Mauritianum.
†Solanum sp. probably S. incanum, Sodom apple — Savoia.

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blocks on the upper part of the arm. The wooden blocks are coloured red with oxide of iron. A band strung with small pieces of wood of the same colour is sometimes worn round the forehead. Some of the married men wear a semi-circle of ivory on the forehead, made of the split canine teeth of the hippopotamus. (The teeth, however, I am informed, is not split, but ground down until it is only an eighth of an inch thick.) Others wear the tusks of a wart-hog. The Ja-luo men, like most of the tribes of Nilotic origin, frequently adopt a curious stork-like attitude, standing on some hillock or ant-hill on one leg with the other leg bent and the sole of the foot opposed to the inner side of the knee of the leg on which the body is poised. They usually wear sandals of leather when travelling.

The Ja-luo live much by agriculture. They cultivate sorghum, sweet potatoes, peas, beans, *eleusine*, pumpkins, tobacco, and hemp. Salt is made from the ashes of reeds. They eat practically all kinds of meat except the hyæna. Young men eat leopard in order to make them fierce in war. The crested crane is universally protected, and is never killed. The women do not eat fowls, and some women do not eat sheep or eggs. Some eat hippopotamus, and some refuse that meat. Women do not drink milk, but eat it cooked with food. They have a disagreeable custom of mixing cows' urine with the milk of the cow. The urine is allowed to stand a day or two in order to increase its flavour. The people say that this admixture increases the amount of butter in the milk. They like the flavour, and think that it has medicinal value. They kill cows by sticking a knife into the jugular vein. The head must be pointed to the west during the operation. Sheep and goats are killed in the same manner. Besides the flesh of fowls, cattle, sheep, and goats, they eat large quantities of fish, which they obtain from the rivers, and, above all, from the waters of the Victoria Nyanza.

Cooking is done entirely by women in earthen pots inside the hut or on the verandah, and the food is served in little wicker baskets. Father and sons eat together in a little separate hut which has open sides. Women eat separately from the men inside their own houses.

They do not hunt much with dogs, but catch a good deal of game in pitfalls. They will also attack the elephant with spears. Fish is caught in the Victoria Nyanza by means of large, conical wicker traps called "dema." The process is as follows: They bring two very long ropes, one end of each of which is firmly secured to the shore. One rope lies, weighted, along the bottom under the water, the other floats on the surface, but from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks. The two ropes above and below correspond with its other, and are connected at intervals with strings to assure their correspondence, while the fringe of papyrus

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855 264 than themselves. As the girls grow older, feeding at odd times is restricted. The girls eat with the mother while their brothers eat with the father. The mother of the family takes particular care that the brothers get some food and even though she may go without herself, she sees that the children eat.

868 *Female education at school-going age.* The traditional education as given by the parents is strictly utilitarian. Its main aim is to prepare the girl for her future as a wife in a family and as a mother of children.

868 312 The girls accompany their mothers or older associates to fetch water, the younger ones being given a very little water in a small pot, usually used for milking. Larger pots are given to the girl as she grows older and stronger, the girls of six and seven being eager to imitate their older playmates. A few of the male children like to go to fetch water with similar containers, but their mothers do not encourage them. The mother of a young girl watches her carefully to see if she is interested in imitating these activities before giving any encouragement.

868 [241] When the girl, at the age of eight or nine, expresses a desire to dig, the mother takes her to a garden early in the morning to let her do so, and releases her at about eight o'clock before the sun becomes too hot. At this [252] time too, if a grinding stone is available, the mother teaches her child to grind corn, this being a continuation of the interest in grinding soil shown at play. The older girls of the group are instructed in giving gruel to the young children they nurse.

868 252 861 In the preparation of food, the girls first learn how to prepare gruel for the babies. But proper cooking comes very gradually and they learn it under the constant observation of the adult members of the family. The food cooked is first tasted by the parents only, when criticisms are openly made and encouragement of future

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success given. In this atmosphere the girl slowly learns to master the art. It is not until she is thoroughly competent that she is allowed to prepare food for visitors.

Relationship with elder children in the family. At first the young girl grows up in fear of and with a submissive attitude towards her older brothers and sisters, the attitude of fear decreasing towards her sisters as she begins more and more to share the same activities. Thus by the time the girls reach adolescence there is a growing feeling of companionship which brings them closer to each other in their everyday tasks, and any dominating attitude becomes consequently weaker. But among boys this attitude persists into adulthood, weakening only with the independence which adult life brings with it. Bullying is less noticeable among girls; boys of the school-going age become very tyrannical with their younger brothers and sisters, and their behaviour leads to frequent squabbles.

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The attitude of a girl towards her older brothers and sisters is influenced by the treatment she receives from them. She can be sent on an errand by any older member of the family. Thus an elder child often passes orders on to her juniors since the errands in a large family are many and frequent. In this way the young girl learns to avoid and perhaps to dislike certain members of the family. As she grows older, she in turn exercises disciplinary action over those beneath her.

Parental attitude. The father plays a rather detached role, but in actual fact he retains a deep-seated interest in his growing daughter as a future promise of wealth. Though fundamentally mothers are equally interested in sons and daughters, they have at this time a more direct influence over their girls. A mother is interested in her daughter partly through her maternal responsibility and partly because of the girl's immediate value to the family, the father being more definitely concerned